

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE FIRST PART.

CHAPTER XII. THE "MANHATTAN".

PAUL WHARTON, the captain of the American merchant-steamer "Manhattan", who was also the owner of that good ship, did not resemble the popular idea of a sailor, except in the open and resolute expression of his face. There was nothing bluff, burly, or wind-contesting in his slight figure, barely of middle height, and finished off with remarkably small hands and feet, or in his refined, slightly aquiline features. He was neat in his dress, decisive in his speech, and sparing of it; a Northerner by birth, and as good a seaman as ever handled a ship in the days of Dibdin and "hearts of oak". The friendship which existed between Captain Wharton and Henry Rodney was of old date, and of that stout and well-wearing kind which is sometimes formed between men of quite different character and tastes. They had met accidentally during Rodney's first sojourn at New York, and, as Wharton was at home just then—having come in for some money, which rendered it unnecessary for him to remain in the merchant service as a matter of livelihood—Rodney saw a good deal of his friend, who was ten years his senior. Under similar circumstances, Rodney would have "retired", or he used to say so, but no such notion occurred to Wharton. He loved the sea-life, and decided on continuing in it, with the difference of being for the future his own skipper. He invested a portion of his money in the purchase of the "Manhattan", and had made several successful trading voyages. On two of these he had already fallen in with Rodney, when

accident, taking a more eccentric course than usual, again brought about a meeting between them at Santiago.

At an early hour even for Cuba, on the morning after the conference between the friends, Pepito Vinent's boat took Rodney out to the "Manhattan". It was a light but serviceable little craft, and Rodney had enjoyed many a pleasant row or sail beyond the harbour-mouth in company with Pepito, or with José, the mulatto boatman.

"Are you coming for a cruise with me?" said Paul Wharton, as Rodney boarded the "Manhattan", followed by the mulatto carrying a large valise with the letters "H. R." painted in white upon it.

"No," said Rodney, shaking hands with him; "I'll explain the luggage presently. Pull off a bit, José, and wait for me."

"I made you out from the point," said Wharton, "and I am right glad to see you. We clear out the day after to-morrow."

"So do I. After I left you yesterday, I met a man who had taken a passage for St. Domingo in the "Cristoval Colon", but will not be able to go. This was precisely what I wanted, so I am going in his place. And I have come on board instead of waiting to meet you at Pinto's, because I have something very serious to say concerning my friend Rosslyn—I told you about him yesterday—and a favour to ask of you."

"I'll do it, whatever it is."

The usual briskness of work and movement on board ship in the morning was all about them; the deck was crowded with bales and barrels. The friends went below to the captain's quarters.

Paul Wharton listened with serious attention to Rodney's narrative. It was identical with Hugh's, but told, of course, from Rodney's own point of view. Wharton interrupted the story occasionally by a

pertinent question, tending to get with exactness at his friend's part in the matter; but he offered no comment from which the direction of his sympathies could be learned, until Rodney reached the point of the proposed elopement. At this point Rodney put very strongly his conviction that the motive of Ines in consenting to elope with Rosslyn was fear for his life at the hands of her cousin.

"How do you know that?" Wharton asked.

"I can't tell you precisely, but I am certain it is so. I felt sure of this when Rosslyn told me she had made less difficulty than he could have expected, and that she had in the first place implored him to leave the island."

"Did he suspect nothing?"

"Not he. He hardly knows De Rodas, and he has very vague ideas about the people here. He is a thorough Englishman, and would treat my theory as mere imagination. But I have always thought this De Rodas a great scoundrel lacking opportunity, and here is one for him. I am convinced that he has terrified the girl somehow, with the help of her father's wife, and it is for Rosslyn's sake she consents. Even if I were not right—but I am—you must acknowledge that her lot is a hard one."

"Hard! It is horrible!" said Wharton, with very promising energy. Rodney had calculated rightly upon rousing the American's indignation at the oppression of a woman.

"And it would be harder," Rodney continued, "if Rosslyn lost his life, and she was sacrificed after all. For, observe, I am not at all afraid of any open proceeding; assassination would be De Rodas's line. I am very sorry for the whole thing, and I feel that it is partly my fault; for I saw that the young fellow was captivated with the girl, and I ought simply to have told him that she was engaged to her cousin, and to have held my tongue about the rest of the story. There would have been no harm done then, and her case would have been no worse than before. I blame myself so much that I would do my utmost to help him out of the scrape now."

"I should think an elopement wasn't an easy thing to manage here, with their watchdog ways."

"It is a very difficult thing, and that there is a much more serious risk attached to failure in this case than there would be in an ordinary one, you will at once perceive. If the attempt to take the girl

away fails, De Rodas can then kill Rosslyn to the general satisfaction. Now, as there is no possibility of preventing Rosslyn from making the attempt, I want to secure the success of it; and for that reason, I have come to you."

"And what am I to do?"

"I'll tell you presently. There are no English steamers, and Rosslyn could not get her away on a Spanish vessel undetected, as no disturbance or cholera scare is going on. Now, you are bound for Jamaica, and if you will take them, all will be safe. They can be married there, and go on to England before any pursuit from here could come up with them, even if it should be discovered how they got away; and if the plan I have thought of can be carried out, I do not think that will happen. What do you say, Wharton? I know it is a big thing to ask of you."

"You are sure of your man? He is quite a new acquaintance, if I understand you rightly."

"I have not known him more than ten days, but I am sure of him. He's a good fellow, if there's one anywhere."

"And the young people will be able to put things right with that incomprehensible old father, you think?"

"I am sure of it, when they are safe from his wife and his nephew; the two persons he is afraid of."

"And the young man's life is in serious danger?"

"I firmly believe it to be so, if he remains in the island."

"Then he sha'n't remain in the island. I'll do it, Rodney."

"Thank you, Wharton; I knew you would."

"I don't see how it is to be done, but we shall come to that. I suppose it means losing a day or two in port?"

"Not at all. If it is to be done, it not only may as well be done quickly, but it must. Only for a lucky accident, the family would have removed to Don Saturnino's hacienda by this time. For every reason, there is not an hour to be lost."

Rodney then explained to Wharton how it had been arranged with Ines that she, on the third morning, was to be informed of the arrangements made by Rosslyn, and that all would depend on her being able to leave the house on the pretext of going to the Convent of Las Anonciades on the day after. This would be the day of the sailing of the "Manhattan", and also of the steamer for St. Domingo.

Wharton, who followed all these details with attention, at this point asked Rodney how many people it would be necessary to trust.

"One, wholly: the young lady's attendant—a confidential servant." He explained that Teresita was absolutely safe, and added: "Another partially: the boatman who rowed me out this morning. But his master has placed him entirely at my orders, and I will take care he gets into no greater trouble than he is well paid for."

Rodney smiled unconsciously at the thought of Pepito's mingled feelings, if it should be discovered to what use his boat had been put, and of all the added consequence he would assume on the strength of it. If the feeling of society should by any accident be favourable to the lovers, it would not be at all beyond Pepito's powers to assume a mysterious air of complicity in the elopement.

"That's well. Now, how is it to be done?"

Upon this question the friends entered into a long discussion, consulting a chart of the bay, and, when it was ended, Paul Wharton proposed to go ashore with his friend.

"By-the-bye," said Rodney, when they were in the boat, "I forgot about the valise. I put up a lot of Rosslyn's clothes and things in it, feeling pretty sure you would help us. Of course he will have to be quite empty-handed."

"All right. But there's another thing: he had better not come on board, or go ashore at Kingston, in his own name, if he wants any time to elapse before he's traced. I make it out that the mail-steamer for Cuba will be going out from Kingston a few hours after we get in, and there would be plenty of time to pick up news of fresh arrivals in the interval, and forward it on."

"Very true," said Rodney. "Let me think. His initials 'H. R.' are on the valise. He must take a name to fit them. Henry Robinson would do."

"But about the marriage? He must give his real name for that."

"Of course; but it won't get out. I can square that for him. Time is all that is wanted, and that nobody should be able to tell the secret before they tell it themselves, from a safe distance."

"The girl's absence will, of course, be found out immediately. In what quarter will the first suspicion lie?"

"In the right one, no doubt; but not as

to the means of her escape. I should think that will not occur to anyone, for a long time, if it ever does. They will think she has been taken to Havana, or into the interior of the island. And the whole thing will turn upon Rosslyn getting a sufficient start of discovery to be able to marry the girl and leave Kingston before anyone sent from here could get there."

"He is independent of his own people, I suppose?"

"I fancy so. He has a sister—that is all I know about his family."

On reaching the landing-place, Rodney dismissed José with a handsome gratuity, whereat his face glistened with joy, and directed him to come up in the evening for orders. He then took Wharton to the camp, where they found Rosslyn.

Rodney and Captain Wharton had a busy day. The latter, in addition to the transaction of the affairs that had brought him to Cuba, made several purchases in the town—oddly enough they were all articles for a lady's use—and he afterwards dined with Rodney at one of the hotels, to meet a select party of the friends of the popular roving commissioner of the "Harbinger". Hugh Rosslyn was not present at this entertainment; he excused himself to Rodney on the plea that he had too much to think of, and would be the worst of company. Rodney took the excuse graciously, but told him to cheer up, adding that everything was in perfect train, and there was nothing to fear. Wharton's turning up at such a crisis, and proving so true to his expectation, was a piece of luck so unexampled, that they were bound to accept it as a good omen for the whole of the enterprise.

When Hugh was alone, with the day's proceedings to look back upon, he was profoundly impressed by the zeal and energy of Rodney and Wharton on his behalf. He had neither the natural disposition nor the acquired experience, that lead men to doubt disinterestedness and set narrow limits to friendship; yet he could not but feel that the conduct of these two men was very unusual. That they should help him so unreservedly—Rodney for his sake, Wharton for Rodney's—in a matter that could not fail to bring a certain amount of odium upon both, when their share in it should be discovered; for the whole truth of the position of Ines, which he and they might plead in justification, could never be made generally known—did seem to him an extraordinary evidence of those qualities which the thorough man of the world

either derides or denies. He never for a moment came near to guessing what was the real spring of their energy.

José arrived as directed, and received his orders vicariously from Hugh. The boat was to be in readiness early on the next day but one, for Hugh's own use. He wished to make a sketch of the Morro Castle from a certain point beyond the mouth of the harbour, and near to a projection of the coast which, Rodney said, José would know, having taken him there with Don Gualterio. José assented readily; and it was arranged that he should come up at the same hour on the next evening to fetch the things that Hugh would want to take with him, so as to have all ready for an early start. The mulatto was an intelligent, pleasant fellow, and he made out Hugh's medley of Spanish and French with the facility of his race. Having dismissed José, Hugh wrote the letter which Teresita was to take to Ines in the morning. Never had he done so important an act as that, and he was sensible of its significance. He wrote as briefly as he could, while making it perfectly clear to Ines what she was to do, and he added to these plain directions a few words of love and gratitude for her trust in him. The writing of this letter consumed a good deal of time, and when it lay sealed upon the table before him, a great misgiving fell upon Hugh. The plan was well laid, complete in every particular, well guarded on all sides, and yet the execution of it hung on so slender a thread! A caprice of Doña Mercedes, any household incident that should prevent Ines from leaving home at the appointed time, any one of the trifles that "make the sum of human things", and the deftly-woven web would be brushed away by the hand of fate, never to be reconstructed. He recalled the earnestness, the passionate intensity with which Ines had insisted upon the latter point, and on his giving her his solemn promise that if their sole opportunity was lost, he would leave Cuba without an attempt to see her again. And although he vaguely felt that he did not fully understand her, he approached the truth no more nearly than he had approached it in pondering over the conduct of his friends.

This fit of thinking held him for a long time in the absorption of suspense. At length he roused himself, and put together the things which were to be taken to the boat. He shook a number of papers out of his writing-case, and having selected

from them Liliás Merivale's latest letter, and placed it in his pocket-book, he tore up all that remained.

Hugh's travelling library was limited, and he decided on leaving it as a legacy to his unknown host. He put the books, with his card—the last one he had—projecting from the topmost, on a shelf among some dusty plaster casts, and collected the implements of his neglected art. This done, he strolled down to the harbour, in the still, starlit night. He could make out the "Manhattan" from the shore. When he got back to the camp, Rodney had come in.

The two days which had meant more to Ines than all the previous days she had seen, had passed without any incident out of the common to mark their course. She felt certain that nothing had been said to her father by his wife. Don Saturnino remarked in his careless way that Ines was not looking well, and Doña Mercedes observed in her smooth tones that they should all be the better for country air. When the third morning came, Ines felt as though it was bringing her death with it; and yet she was relieved by its coming. She accompanied Doña Mercedes to the cathedral, and on her return the letter which bore her fate awaited her. Hugh had also given Teresita a parcel for her.

To-morrow! Her own freedom; her lover's safety; release from the power of the man whom she feared and hated, and the woman who hated her; a new life; the divine happiness that was her innocent dream of wifehood; or defeat, despair. Ines owed more than she knew to her stepmother's increased dislike. Doña Mercedes had kept her constantly with her during the last three days; and, when Ines with ceremonious composure asked to be permitted to pass a couple of days at the convent for the purpose of completing her embroidery in time for the fiesta, her stepmother's first impulse to mortify her by a refusal yielded to the temptation to get rid of her for a while, in a manner for which she could not be called to account by Norberto de Rodas. It was with real terror under her mask of calmness that Ines obeyed an injunction to ask for two days, which had been conveyed to her by Hugh at Rodney's suggestion.

It was long before Ines was able to recall the hours of that last day in detail; but the time did come when each of them stood out in her memory distinct and

clear. They passed on in their course as smoothly as a broad river runs to a great fall. There was a small dinner-party, and some people looked in afterwards; her father noticed her no more than usual.

At the appointed time next morning, Ines and Teresita presented themselves at the door of the Convent of Las Anonciades, and Ines was admitted by the portress. Teresita, who carried a basket, walked away as usual; but the old woman did not take the road homeward; she went no farther than a few yards down the stony lane. There she waited, her back turned to the street, furtively telling her beads. She had been instructed that if she had not been joined by Ines before half an hour had expired, she was to go on to the space beyond the convent wall, where she would then meet Hugh, and she was to bid him remember his promise of leaving the island at once, all being over. So fixed was the resolution of Ines that her faithful friend should not suffer for her fidelity, that she had staked all on enabling Teresita to prove that she had fulfilled her charge, and seen Ines safe within the door of the convent. This resolve was not quite so rash as it might seem; it was calculated upon the knowledge of the place which Ines possessed, and the freedom she enjoyed there. Beyond the porteria was a small room called the vestiary, and next to it was the workroom: this would be empty, as Ines knew, for the next ten minutes; so she entered it boldly in the sight of the portress, who paid no further heed to her. A minute after, she noiselessly slipped out of the workroom and into the vestiary. Presently came the sound she waited for—a single stroke of a bell. She heard the scrape of a chair upon the stone floor, and after a pause, more dreadful than all that had gone before, went out into the corridor. The porteria was empty; the key was in the lock. In another moment Ines was free.

No time was wasted after she and Teresita met Hugh, and but few words were spoken. The long hours of the night had witnessed the real parting of the girl and the old woman. In a few moments Ines was dressed in a travelling-cloak, hat, and veil of English construction—a most effective disguise. She fervently embraced Teresita, and was hurried away by her lover, who placed her hand within his arm in the English fashion.

Teresita stood on the spot where they

had left her until their forms were lost in the distance; then she fell on her knees, and laid her forehead on the earth. To what extraordinary mixture of prayer and malediction she gave utterance in that brief paroxysm of anguish, only one of her own race could guess. Recovering her feet, she looked about her cautiously. The space was still clear, and she took her way home.

The "Manhattan" cleared out of the harbour of Santiago de Cuba at noon, passing unchecked over the chain that bars the progress to the high seas of suspect or defaulter, leaving the Morro Castle and its heights behind it, and steamed down the beautiful bay. The smooth, sunny sea was dotted here and there with sails, and presently, from the far side of a projection of the coast, a light boat shot out, pulled by two strong rowers in the direction of the steamer, which slackened speed. A few minutes more, and Ines had been received on board his ship by Paul Wharton with grave respect, and was listening with bewildered agitation to his apologies for the limited provision he had been able to make for her comfort.

José pulled himself leisurely back to the nook behind the projection, and basked in his boat until evening, the happiest mulatto in the island.

That night, while Ines was sleeping in the captain's cabin, Hugh walked the "Manhattan's" deck in the starlight, talking of Rodney and of the story of his own brief courtship to Paul Wharton, who knew it better than he did.

"It was a tremendous resolution for such a girl to come to," said the captain.

"It was, indeed. She shall never regret or repent it."

MY UNCLE.

I PROPOSE to say a few words in this article concerning the pawnbroking trade, and one or two matters closely connected with it. The trade is little understood, and, I may almost add, less respected, by the great majority of people, who are inclined to look upon a pawnbroker as a being who is not entitled to the least sympathy or friendly feeling. They regard him in one of two lights—either as a man keeping a shop where poor people, forced by poverty and want, may leave their household goods, their dearest treasures, receiving a sum of money for them which

is altogether inadequate to their real value, or they look upon him as a man who provides drunken and dissolute people with the means of indulging their passions—a man who reaps a rich harvest out of other people's follies. They will tell you plainly that pawnbrokers make extravagant profits, and they will hint that, not contented with the tremendous profit the law allows them, pawnbrokers make money in ways which would not bear the light of day. They regard a pawnshop as a sort of spider's-web, into which poor flies, in the shape of human beings, are decoyed, whilst the pawnbroking spider laughs and grows fat at their expense.

As an assistant in the trade, I think I may lay claim to a fair knowledge of its working, as I experience it day after day, standing at a pawnshop-counter, and, with the reader's permission, I will describe a day's work at my employer's establishment as clearly and as plainly as I can.

Pawnbrokers' shops may be divided into three classes. First comes the highest class of all, whose trade lies chiefly in valuable plate and jewellery. They have no regular weekly trade in the ordinary sense of the word; their customers are generally people in good positions, who now and then find themselves short of ready money. This being the case, their trade is very irregular; on some days they will lend large sums of money, on others little or nothing. Such shops require a very large capital, and are only to be met with in big cities, such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Glasgow. They will take valuable clothing, in the way of furs and such things, readily enough, but ordinary clothes they do not care for, whilst common workmen's tools, and articles of that kind, are of no use at all to them.

In the second class of shops are those which, whilst they are able to take articles worth large amounts, are not above taking small pledges. There are plenty of such shops in large cities, whilst in smaller towns they rank as first-class shops. They have a regular weekly trade from people living near, but as they are generally in the business centres of towns, where there are not many dwelling-houses, this is not often large.

The third class of pawnbrokers includes those who make the bulk of their profits from a large and regular weekly trade. Often they are licensed to take plate, but they may have only a simple pawnbroker's

licence, if the proprietor thinks the custom from plate would not be large enough to warrant the expense of a special licence. You will find such shops in the thickly-populated neighbourhoods, from which they mainly draw their custom. They may be found in the centre of small towns, and often in the very heart of large cities, in old neighbourhoods; but those of this class that do the best business are, as a rule, towards the outskirts. There are fewer shops and warehouses there than in the centre, and the streets are given up to rows of cottages, which shelter the customers who bring grist to the pawnbroking mill. Of course, occasional customers are just as acceptable in these as in either of the other two kinds of pawnshops. What I wish the reader to understand is that the latter class of shops chiefly depend for their custom upon people living in the neighbourhood, who visit them regularly week after week.

The shop I have selected for description is one of the third class.

Let the reader, therefore, suppose that I am, one Monday morning, in the centre of a Lancashire town. The time is the middle of summer, a little past five. I am on my way to my work at a pawnshop, distant about three-quarters of a mile from here, and, whether the time be winter or summer, I must be there by half-past five, ready to begin the day's work.

Monday is the only day on which we open so very early; eight o'clock is the time throughout the rest of the week. The reason why we open so soon on the Monday morning is because some of our customers are obliged, on the Saturday, to pledge some of the clothes in which they go to work, before they can redeem those they wish to wear on the Sunday. For this reason we must be open on Monday morning in time to enable them to bring back their Sunday clothes and redeem their everyday ones.

In the centre of the town the streets are very quiet; they are not busy till towards nine o'clock. But as we draw nearer the shop the scene becomes more animated. Those who work at some distance from their homes are beginning to turn out. The factories start at either six or half-past, and there will be more people in this main street between a quarter to six and thirty minutes past that hour than at any time of the day, till the hour for knocking off work at night.

It is the first working-day of the week,

and the factory-hands look their best. The women have clean clogs and aprons—brats, the wearers call them. The men—the spinners, at any rate—have clean washed trousers. The women all wear clogs, and the men did so till a few years ago; now boots and shoes are the rule amongst the men, and clogs the exception. If you see a woman going to work wearing a pair of boots, it is most probably for one of these two reasons: either her clogs are getting repaired, or there is a hole in her stocking which she has had either no time or no inclination to mend, and which would show if she wore the wooden-soled under-standings. To those accustomed to wearing them, clogs are far warmer and more comfortable than boots.

This is our shop, at the corner of this side-street. This front-door that I am unlocking leads into the sale department, technically called the front shop. The pledge-office, known in the trade as the back shop, is entered by a door in a lobby which runs across the end of the building from one side-street to the other. There is nothing particularly interesting about the front shop; it is much the same as any other shop, except that here the bulk of the clothes have been worn instead of being new. Our business to-day lies in the back shop, so, having got the windows open ready for work, we will unfasten the back-door and let the customers in, for there are some waiting.

One moment, though. You had better look round the place before I open the door. As you see, the counter runs from one side of the shop to the other, and is without a door, so that there is no way of getting to the customers' side except by jumping over it. That book, on the desk at the end there, is for entering the pledges as they are taken. The private boxes, which are provided by many pawnbrokers for modest customers, are not to be found here. The whole space allotted to customers is left open, such an arrangement being thought best adapted to the kind of trade done here. Upon the walls are hung notices relating to the trade—such as taking pledges from children under age, the rate of interest, the necessity of giving correct names and addresses, and various other minor matters.

The apprentice has opened the door, and five or six people, who were waiting, come in—all women and all factory operatives. Each carries a greater or less quantity of clothing, and all, except one, redeem some

which they take back with them; it seems that the solitary exception has nothing in pledge which she is obliged to take out before going to work. That taken out by the rest belongs, perhaps, to themselves, perhaps to members of their family, who, maybe, cannot stir out till the mother comes back. The pawnbroker takes the clothing from each customer and either rolls it into one bundle, or makes it into parcels, as the owner may think proper. He does not ask any of these first comers their names; nay, he has not even asked any of them how much they want on their bundles. They come regularly, week after week—bringing their clothes on Monday and taking them out again on Saturday—so that he knows all about them and their wants perfectly well.

The apprentice enters each pledge in the book, writing out a corresponding ticket for it, which ticket is then divided in two, one part for the customer, the other to be pinned to the pledge, that the pawnbroker may be able to identify it when the owner wishes to redeem it. As soon as the ticket is made out, the money due is handed to the customer, whilst the apprentice places the pledge or pledges on some shelves—"racking," pawnbrokers call them—against the wall of the shop. In some places the pledges are thrown on the floor, and not stowed away until the shop is closed; but in Lancashire, except, perhaps, in the lowest parts of Liverpool, the people would not submit to having their clothes handled in such unceremonious fashion.

Fresh customers keep coming in as the others are served, and till half-past six the shop is never empty.

This woman who has just pushed the door open is altogether out of breath as she hurries into the shop; she works at a mill just outside the town, and is rather late this morning. "James," she says, putting her bundles on the counter, "gie me mi skirt, an' I'll ca' for th' tickets an' money at dinner-toime. I hev'n't time to wait now." The pawnbroker does so, and places her bundle on one side; the tickets for them will be made out sometime during the forenoon when business is a little slacker.

There are no more factory-workers now, as it is past starting-time, and the customers who are in the shop at present are not in as great a hurry to be served. The door opens, and a blue uniform with bright buttons fills the doorway. It is the policeman on the beat, and he hands

the pawnbroker a narrow slip of paper, giving him, at the same time, the morning's compliments, with a remark about the weather. The paper, called a "slip", contains a description of some boots stolen late on Saturday night from a shop-door, and one is given to each pawnbroker in the town that he may keep a look-out for them, in case they are offered in pledge.

Towards seven o'clock the customers begin to come in greater numbers; women of all ages and appearances, a few girls, and perhaps a growing lad or two. We have no licence for plate here, so that they all bring some kind of clothing. Pledges for larger amounts than ten shillings have a larger ticket than pledges of that sum or under. Those for more than ten shillings are called "accountables", I suppose because the pawnbroker is accountable for them after the twelve months have expired and the article is out of pledge. He cannot sell such pledges until he has first offered them by auction, of which due notice must be given in the town's newspaper. The pawnbroker may bid for the pledge against the owner or any other bidder; but if it fetches a larger sum than the amount lent on it, and the interest due, the owner can claim the balance from the pawnbroker, who is obliged to pay it to him. Pledges for sums over two pounds are called "contract-pledges", all the terms of which, except the rate of interest, are arranged between the pawnbroker and the owner at the time of pledging.

That tall, hulking fellow who has just come in, and asks for four shillings on a pair of trousers, wants the money for drink. He is a fitter, a first-class man at his trade, who can earn between two and three pounds a week, but "the drink" is a curse to him. Listen; the master is asking him why he has not gone to work. "Well, aw didn't feel so weel this mornin', an' aw thowt aw'd hev a quarter." He means that he will not start work till after breakfast; but with that money in his pocket, it is only too probable that his work will not see him at all to-day—perhaps not to-morrow. Good wages are the ruin of him, as of some other men besides. When he is "on spree", and determined to drink, if we refused to take his clothes in pawn, he would go and sell them. So we have orders from his wife to take his things from him, but to lend him as small a sum on them as he will take. When he has had his fling for a day or two, he will go back to work, and he

is such a good hand at his trade that he is always allowed to start as if nothing had happened. He is just in his prime now, and his masters may have nobody as competent as himself to do his work; but some day, as he gets older, he will go back after a spree, and be told that he need not come any more. Then will his evil days come thick and fast upon him.

Whilst talking of this, let me say that pawnbrokers, as a rule, do not care much for this kind of custom. There are several reasons for this; in the first place, the man's wife may come and scold us because we have taken his clothes, or perhaps the man will come again and wish to have a further advance upon them. If we refuse to give it, he will possibly kick up a row, particularly if he is, as he probably will be, half drunk at the time. And when he is sober, and comes to redeem them, he naturally enough feels that he is paying for his spree, so that he is often inclined to be rather snappish and ill-tempered.

That young woman, offering a dress in pledge, is not a native of this place, though I cannot tell where she comes from—somewhere north, I think, by her accent. Hers is a rather sad case. Her husband worked in an iron foundry here, but a short time ago he deserted her and their three children. She has never worked in a factory, so she has to take in washing for a living, and sometimes it is more than she can do to make ends meet.

That little woman next to her is one of our heaviest customers—I mean as regards the extent of her pledging, not her bodily weight. In the latter respect she is very thin and fragile, and I dare say it would be as much as she could do to draw the scale at a hundred pounds. She has a large family, and her youngest is at least fifteen or sixteen years of age. They are all workers earning fair wages, so that, like the great body of our customers, the sole cause of her presence here is a want of proper management at home.

Her speech tells you at once that she is not a native of Lancashire. The other day I asked her where she came from, and she told me Guildford, in Surrey. I forget what she said the staple trade was, but it is a place where there is nothing for women to do, and as most of her family are girls, she brought them down to Lancashire. She said her daughters were earning her a deal of money now; they were all working in the mill, and really doing

her some good. I dare say this will seem rather paradoxical, when I say that this morning she will take away from here above three pounds in place of those things she has brought—her family's Sunday clothes. How this can happen with a family earning as much money as hers does, I will try to explain farther on.

It has got well into the forenoon now, and still the customers keep coming in. This man who is entering now is a detective belonging to our borough force. It seems there has been a case of shop-breaking some time during the night, so he has jotted down a few particulars in his note-book, and is hurrying round to give pawnbrokers timely warning. The beat policeman will bring us a more detailed list later in the day.

Listen to that garrulous old woman. How she is chattering. She is very old—over seventy, I dare say, and has frequented pawnshops a long time, probably all her life. She is relating her experiences therein to her next neighbour.

"Yo'll not rek'lect when owd Solomon Brandon kept a pop-shop i' Chapel Street, du yo' ? Eh, ther wor some doins theear ! Aw've sin mony a toime when aw've hed to wait a good share ov an hour o' bein' sarved. An' he wor so crammed, iv yo' hedn't yor bundle unpinned or unteed ready for him to luk at, yo' missed yor torn, an' he sarved someburry else. He dud a rare trade, too, aw con tell yo'. That row wheear his shop wors awtered now, but aw mind th' place wheear it wor weel."

The old woman is almost in her dotage, and has nothing of her own to pledge, but she manages to earn a few coppers by bringing bundles for women who are too lazy or too "busy" to bring them themselves. She is troubled with asthma, or some such complaint, and has not slept in a bed for several years. Do you see those blue marks on her shrivelled arms ? Her husband is dead now, but whilst he was living he was a very brutal fellow, and those are traces of some of the caresses he bestowed on her during his life. See what hard work it is for the feeble creature to open the door when she is served ; it is plated with iron, which makes it rather heavy, and it has a spring behind to ensure its closing. When she has managed to open it wide enough to let herself out, it saves her any further trouble in the matter by pressing against her back and pushing her into the lobby. Poor creature ! she will not be long here now, and I should think will not

be sorry when she receives orders to go elsewhere.

The hours roll on, and still the customers come and go till eight o'clock, when the shop will be closed, and business be over for the day. When that hour arrives, we shall have taken rather more than two hundred small pledges, and from twenty-five to thirty "accountables"; the money lent will amount to about seventy pounds. During the week we shall take about five hundred pledges, and the amount lent will be about a hundred pounds. From this it will be seen that Monday is by far the busiest day of the week.

Perhaps it may appear odd that we should lend seventy pounds on two hundred and fifty pledges on the Monday, and only thirty pounds on the same number during the rest of the week. It happens thus. On Monday the pledges are for larger amounts than in the middle of the week, when the customers pledge bundles for only two or three shillings, often only a few pence. One thing I forgot to mention till now. The pawnbroker laid some of the clothes loosely on the counter, instead of rolling them up into bundles like the rest ; and when the tickets were made out, those clothes were put in a different place to the others. If they were men's things, they would be loosely folded and put down in some convenient place ; if women's, they were hung on hooks in the shop. The meaning of this is, that the owner pays a penny for the privilege of having the clothes hung up or placed in a drawer, by which means they escape being creased, or showing other marks of the uncle's care.

If the customers are strangers, we ask them certain set questions ; such as their names and addresses, whether the pledge is their own property, and if it is not, the names and addresses of the owner. The question as to the pledge being their own property is one which often causes a good bit of annoyance, because many people regard it as a reflection on their honesty. If the customer is a blustering sort of fellow, he will often flare up and tell you he is not in the habit of stealing, whilst, if he is of a more refined type, he says very little, but looks as much hurt as if you had struck him.

There is another clause in the Pawnbrokers' Act, which says that pledges must not be taken from children under twelve years of age. This law is observed rigidly in the spirit, but is often broken in the letter, for it is the custom amongst pawn-

brokers to take pledges from children under age, if the mother or someone old enough has brought the pledge in the first instance. If a child brings a strange bundle, it is at once sent to the right about, and told that someone older must bring it.

And, now, let me try to show how it is that people, with regular work and fair wages, have to come to such a place. Let us take the case of the woman from Guildford. There are hundreds of similar ones, but as she has been mentioned, we will give her affairs our attention. That woman has five children working. Everyone in the family works, in fact, except herself, and their united wages at the week's end will amount to very little short of four pounds. That income is large enough to keep them very comfortably if properly expended, and does so for a time, but, what with money spent on dress and one thing and another, they live quite up to their income, and there is nothing put by for a rainy day. Matters go on smoothly enough for a while, till something happens out of the usual course—sickness in the house, perhaps—or a holiday comes, and they want extra money to spend. Whatever it is they want money, and, having none to meet the emergency, they visit their uncle.

This being so, if they want to get properly straight again, they ought to save as much as they can out of their income every week, till they are able to redeem the clothes. But what is it that nearly always happens when the first week-end comes round? The young man or woman, boy or girl, whose clothes are in pledge, naturally thinks he or she will be disgraced if unable to dress up on the Sunday. Their wages come to more than the sum required to redeem the clothes, and the interest is only a few pence, why not take them out? They do so; but as they have not paid for their week's food, the clothes have to go back on the Monday morning, after which the provision-dealer gets paid what is owing to him.

Or, if the mother has wanted money, and pledged their clothes unknown to her family, as often happens, she is obliged to get them out for the Sunday. Her children are in full work, earning good wages, and as this makes them rather independent, she dare not ask them to do without their Sunday clothes. I had proof of this the other day. A customer of ours, who usually pledges for a fair amount, came in, but instead of bringing the usual quantity,

she had only one small bundle, upon which she wanted, I think, two shillings. Whilst I was serving her, she said: "I darn't bring th' other things this week. Th' factory's bin brokken down, an' aw shouldn't be able to get 'em out at week-end. We mon get through t' week as weel as we con."

This description would serve for ninety out of a hundred of our customers, and proves at once that if people exercised proper care in living within their incomes, putting something by for unforeseen events, there need be little or no pledging. The other ten out of the hundred are composed of two classes: those who pledge through real want, and those who do so for drink. Of the two, the latter will number above half of the ten, so that the percentage of those who pledge through poverty, pure and simple, is a very small one.

That there is no real need for much of the custom that pawnbrokers receive is proved by two simple facts. The first is that the trade is always at its best when times are good, and the country is in a prosperous condition. The second is that the trade is always larger in the summer than in the winter of any given year. In summer people earn more money than in winter, whilst they incur less expense for domestic purposes; they require neither as much food, gas, or coals, as in winter. So that if people only pledged on account of poverty in the true sense of the word, there ought to be more pledging in winter than in summer, whereas, in fact, there is less.

And, now, one word about the uncle himself; and, first of all, with regard to his profits. During last year this shop made a gross average profit, from back shop and front—in a word, the whole establishment—of five pounds eight shillings a week. Out of that, salaries, rent, and all expenses had to be paid. The money my master has sunk in the shop amounts, in round numbers, to a thousand pounds. The stock is worth a little more than that according to the stock-book, but we will put it at a thousand. If a draper or grocer has that quantity of money invested in his business, do you think he will be contented with a less profit than that which my master makes? I think not. Pawnbroking is a lucrative trade, in an ordinary sense, but its members do not make the outrageous profits that many people suppose.

Again, it is a commonly-received opinion that it is entirely to the pawnbroker's benefit if the pledge runs out, instead of

being redeemed by the owner. In such a shop as that which I have been describing, and which represents by far the largest class of pawnshops, it is entirely otherwise. If all the owners were to redeem their property, and allow none of it to run out, the pawnbroker would make more money than he does at present. And further, such a pawnbroker as I have described, if he can find anyone willing to buy his forfeits, as they are called, will always sell them for five, and sometimes even ten per cent. less than the amount he lent on them twelve months before. If any reader of these lines doubts my assertion, let him buy a copy of the trade paper, the Pawnbroker's Gazette, and I think he will find that what I say is strictly the truth, as there are advertisements in it to that effect nearly every week. Of course, to shops of the first class, the above rule does not apply; it pays such shops better to have their pledges run out. Their trade is an occasional one, and their stock does not suffer as much from depreciation in value.

Concerning the character of pawnbrokers as a body, I do not say that there are no black sheep amongst them; there are some in every flock; and, just as there are butchers who deal in "slink" meat, and grocers who sell adulterated articles, so there are pawnbrokers, I dare say, who get their living by doubtful means. But, if weighed in the balance against other trades, the pawnbroker will not be found wanting. He has been complimented in police-courts in every part of the country for the assistance he has given to the cause of justice, whilst cases in which he has been brought up for offences against the law are very few and rare.

"My uncle," after all, is not the worst member of the national family.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

JOHN STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

I NEVER had more pleasant rooms than those I once occupied in John Street, Golden Square. The street runs out of one corner of the square, and from this corner the house in which I lodged stood about twenty yards distant; so, in the summer, I could always get a sight of the green trees in the enclosure, merely by putting my head out of the window. Then again, as John Street led to nowhere in particular, there was no perpetual clatter

of wheels to disabuse me of the belief that I was really in the country; that is, when I was turning my eyes towards the square. When I looked straight before me it was another matter; for there, of course, stood my "Over the Way".

As mere structures, the houses on the opposite side of the street were much humbler than those on my own. They were the ordinary fourth-rate London tenements; the walls as flat as if they had been carefully planed after they were finished; not a fragment of cornice or any other projection. The windows always reminded me of the eyes of a man who had had his eyebrows shaved, and over the doors there were none of the shell-fashioned plaster canopies like the one which often gave me protection from the rain, while I was standing on my doorstep fumbling for my latch-key. The man who has travelled London will know, that anyone taking rooms in the vicinity of Golden Square must be prepared to find himself pretty frequently brought into contact with the floating population of strangers of all lands, who, for one cause or another, take up their abode in London. Yet, somehow, Golden Square does not thrust itself into prominence as a foreign quarter so boldly as does Leicester Square or Soho. It lies more secluded than either of these, though so close to the great traffic of Regent Street; and I have reason to believe that its denizens are of a less migratory character than those of the districts above-mentioned. To judge by the numbers of cafés and houses of entertainment called by high-sounding names in all languages, one would say that the foreign element was not given to feed at home, and as to the "*Blanchisseries françaises*", how they all got a living I cannot imagine, for the "foreign element", to judge from those members of it I used to meet in my walks, did not give one the idea that it spent any large portion of its income with the laundress.

I soon discovered that John Street was full of foreigners. How do they occupy themselves in London, these aliens, with seemingly nothing to do? Why should they be content with our gloomy streets and inhospitable parks, void of the marble-tabled cafés which seem to be a primary need in other countries? How much better would they fare in any fourth-rate town across the Channel, for half the price they pay in London! They can't all be conspirators, and they can't all be fugitives

from the law in these days of extradition treaties. Foreigners of all sorts, fat and lean, short and tall, blond and swarthy, dwelt in John Street, but I cannot say that I learnt to take much interest in the goings and comings of any of them, save of the two who lived opposite to me in the second-floor front.

They were father and daughter; I soon satisfied myself on that point. The father was tall, lean, grizzled, and upright, the very type of the "vielle moustache", with that mingled look of fierceness and tenderness so often found in combination. As he walked along the street with the girl's arm in his own, or more usually leaning upon her for support, the glance he gave to the passing world was truculent enough to have slain, if looks could have killed; but when he bent down, talking to the girl, his eyes would grow as tender as a mother's when watching over her sleeping baby. The daughter was slight and graceful, with regular features, which just escaped being very pretty; but her eyes were eyes which would have lent beauty to any face, however commonplace otherwise. They were dark, liquid eyes, with that depth and tenderness in them which Southern eyes, telling as they may be, so seldom possess. There was in them nothing of the bold black hardness of the Spanish or Italian eye. They were such as one might meet on a hillside in Galway, or in a Breton market-place. The girl had a shrinking, timid look, never going out without her father, and often keeping at home for days at a time. With the help of my trusty binocular, I soon made out what were her indoor pursuits. Often she would work at her water-colour drawing at a table near the window, for five or six hours at a stretch, and, when the dusk came on, she would invariably go to the piano and sing, in some strange tongue, a sad melody with the sweetest of voices. She also played with much brilliancy and feeling. One day Dr. Clausius happened to hear her, and with his customary omniscience declared that what she was playing was a Polish melody, which Chopin had woven into one of his dreamy, plaintive nocturnes. A few days after this Clausius saw the father coming out of the house. He at once affirmed that my opposite neighbour was a certain Stanislaus Mierzwinsky, a former professor at the university of Posen, who had been dismissed from his post on account of his political opinions. I need hardly say that I

gave to both of the above-named assertions the amount of credence I deemed due to them—and that was not much.

The house over the way was a quiet one. I believe that the father and daughter were the only lodgers, consequently I was rather surprised to see a young gentleman, faultlessly attired and apparently of the first fashion, ring at the door-bell for several days in succession. He always appeared about ten minutes after the old man had gone out, and, for the first half-dozen times he called, he was sent away by the landlady as she answered the bell. I noticed that he always went back into the square, where a smart, private cab was awaiting him. There came a day, however, when he was admitted. Then he remained in the house about a quarter of an hour, and drove away in his cab as before.

This day and this visit marked an epoch in the history of the goings and comings of my neighbours. The young man came to the house no more, and the girl often went out by herself, tripping rapidly away in the direction of Regent Street. One particular summer afternoon I noticed her go out. The father had gone out some half an hour before, and, quite contrary to his habit, returned early, long before the girl came back. A minute or so after she had entered the house, I heard the old man's voice in loud, chiding tones, through the open window. He moved over towards the fireplace, where I could see him plainly, and stood with his back to her, leaning on the mantelpiece. The girl came to the window for a moment, and, as she turned away, she buried her face in her handkerchief, and sank into a chair, weeping bitterly. For some minutes there was silence, but words were not needed to tell me the meaning of the episode I had just witnessed. I could not keep back a certain sense of shame that I was, as it were, playing the spy, and I was just going to put down my glass, to resume the perusal of a most interesting chapter in a Treatise Concerning the Inconceivable Realities, when the old man put off his offended attitude and, walking round to the place where the girl was sitting, laid his hand upon her shoulder softly and tenderly. Then she sprang up and threw her arms about his neck, and, when I saw him stroke her hair, and print a kiss upon her brow, I concluded that the offence, whatever it might have been, had been forgiven and the quarrel made up. I soon determined that the smart young man was the cause

of the little scene I had witnessed; and my theory received what I considered to be effectual confirmation by the events of the following day. Neither the old man nor the girl went out morning or afternoon, but just as it was getting dark, the young man rang at the door, was admitted at once, remained in the house for more than an hour, and when he came out the light of the neighbouring gas-lamp showed me that his face was radiant with happiness.

About ten days after this episode, I noticed that the window of the ground-floor room opposite contained a card announcing that lodgings were to let. Suddenly the thought flashed across my mind that the father and daughter were gone, and, sure enough, as I sat pondering whether it could really be so, the dandified young man rang the bell again, and after rather a lengthy parley with the landlady, hurried back into the square, bearing with him a small parcel which the landlady had given to him, and drove off. I saw no more of him, nor of those whom he sought, so I concluded they had all vanished into the great unknown. Had I not been blessed with a friend like Simpson, I should naturally have given up all hope of ever seeing or hearing again of any one of them; but I felt quite sure that he would be able, sooner or later, to throw some light on the cause of this sudden departure. I remembered, too, that the last time he was with me, while we were discussing my neighbours, the smart young man rang the bell. Simpson said that his face was quite familiar to him, and thereupon I asked, point-blank, who the young man might be; but my friend turned the question with a smile, saying I had better wait a little; before long, perhaps, he would have a story to tell me about him and the others as well.

A day or two after I had satisfied myself that my neighbours were really gone, Simpson came to see me. A sad look passed over his face as I told him what had happened, and when I had finished, he said he thought he knew where the fugitive had gone, and that he feared trouble was in store for them all. I suppose the light of curiosity must have shone very strongly in my eyes, or Simpson must have otherwise divined the thought which was passing in my brain, for he went on to say:

"Ah, I see you want to know their fate. Well, it happens that my business takes me next week to Dresden, so I will go on a little farther, and glean all I can about them."

Simpson often spoke of his business;

but I could never learn in what line of commerce it lay. I only judged, from hearing him talk so much about foreign places, that it was connected with Continental traffic; but, at this particular moment, I was in no way curious about Simpson personally. I was only curious to know what he could find out about the father and daughter, and the gay young man, whose advent I could not help associating with the departure of the other two.

Simpson took his leave, and for nearly six weeks I saw nothing of him. Then, when he came back one wintry day in late autumn, I could see by his look that his travels had not been in vain, and that, unlike the knife-grinder, he had a story to tell.

"After I parted from you," he began, "I set out for Dresden. My business detained me there about ten days, and then I turned my face eastward and travelled to Warsaw, for there I felt pretty sure that I should fall in with your late neighbours, and as it happened I was not mistaken. I soon found out that M. Mierzwinsky—your friend Clausius was at least right about his name—and his daughter were living in an apartment in a gloomy old house, in a narrow street, which branched off the main thoroughfare leading to the East Gate. I seldom failed to see the pair every morning, when it was fine, in the public garden; the father, a little more worn and anxious-looking than he used to be in London, and the girl very pale and sad. They took, as a rule, two turns in the central walk, and then sat down to rest on a bench at the end. The old man never exchanged a word with anyone; but I noticed that he would now and then greet a passer-by with a rapid glance, or a slight and almost imperceptible motion of the hand.

A service I had once done to a colleague of Mierzwinsky's at Posen gave me an opportunity of speaking to him one day, as he was sitting in the public garden. The old man started, and recoiled from me a little at first; but when I went on to talk of his friend, and of one or two episodes in which he himself was concerned, he put aside his reserve, and talked freely with me on every subject save one, and this subject I knew well enough was ever foremost in his own thoughts as it was in mine. And on this subject, which was nothing less than the freeing of Poland from the Russian yoke, it would have been very perilous to converse in the open air, much more in a public place. Indeed, from the

day when I first spoke to Mierzwinsky, I found myself the object of assiduous attention from divers members of the police. They tracked me back to my hotel, overhauled my papers two or three times in the course of a week, and left me with threatening words and still more threatening looks. The landlord, too, gave me a friendly hint. The people, he said, were everywhere uneasy, and there were plenteous signs of coming trouble. Should the trouble come, it would not go well with those who had incurred the resentment or even the suspicion of the Government, for the Government was very strong and very severe. The landlord was a man of substance, and presumably on the side of law and order; but he sighed, and his voice was sad as he spoke these last words. But by this time I began to take a strong interest in Mierzwinsky, and I was not in the humour to be balked of my fancy by the frowns of a police-spy. The old man soon saw that I was watched, and one day, as he shook hands with me, he left in my palm a scrap of paper, which I read when I was safe in my own room. It ran as follows:

"Do not speak to me again in public. I know I may trust you, so I will ask you to come to my rooms; but not by the front door. Ring at Number Twenty-seven, Pultusk Street. Show this paper to the man who opens the door, and he will bring you in."

"Just after dark that same evening, I rang at the door of the house Mierzwinsky had named. It was in a narrow back street running parallel to the one in which his own house stood. The door was opened by a pale man, with a very high forehead and a profusion of dark hair falling over his shoulders. He looked at me suspiciously, almost fiercely, at first, but, as soon as he saw the writing on the paper I gave him, his manner changed. He closed the outer door hastily, and signalled me to follow him up the stairs. Half-way up the first flight, where one would have expected to find a landing, was a curtain stretched along the wall, and behind this was a narrow doorway. The man took a key from his pocket, and having opened this, bade me go through the passage beyond it. At the end he told me I should find another door unfastened which led into Mierzwinsky's house.

"I followed his directions, and, at the end of the passage, found myself in a sort of lumber-room lighted only from the roof, and filled with stacks of firewood. I picked

my way through them towards a light which I saw streaming in from a door on the left hand. Through this Mierzwinsky appeared, and, drawing aside a curtain, requested me to follow him. I did so, and found myself in a lofty, well-proportioned room, comfortably furnished, and bearing evidence everywhere of the presence and touch of a refined woman. The daughter, whose name was Vera, welcomed me gracefully. A piano stood near the fireplace, and some pretty water-colour sketches hung on the walls. Amongst them I recognised one of a certain house in John Street, with the head of a certain savant, seen poring over his books through a second-floor window. So you see that Vera, poor child! also had an eye for her 'Over the Way'."

"But the girl's face had a look upon it which was not there when you first pointed her out to me. It was a look such as one sees upon the faces of those who have some direful secret in their keeping, who are ever on the alert for the stroke of adverse fate. It told of unhappiness indeed; but it told of something else besides. The girl and her father had doubtless many weighty secrets from the rest of the world; but I soon felt sure that Vera had some secret which her father did not share.

"I continued my visits to Mierzwinsky's house every day after my first introduction, and, more often than not, one or two others would come in while I was there. My host introduced me to them all in due form; but all the conversation which went on in my presence was of the most conventional kind. One man would discuss art criticism with Mdlle. Vera; and another would compare notes with Mierzwinsky as to the excellencies or deficiencies of the company playing at present at the theatre. Another would bring in with him the official journal and read the items of Government news with an affectation of interest, and one day he informed us that Count Feodor Natriskine had been relieved of his duties as military attaché at the Court of St. James's.

"Now I knew that Natriskine was the name of the young man who used to pay visits to the house opposite, in which Mierzwinsky was lodging then, and I had very little doubt that the then military attaché at London and Vera's suitor were one and the same person. I felt likewise a sure presentiment that I should see him in Warsaw before many days should roll by, and it turned out that I was not mistaken. In less than a week I met him, shabbily dressed, strolling about in the public

garden; but, though I saw him pass close by Vera and her father over and over again, he took not the slightest notice of them, nor they of him. Here, then, lay the clue to the mystery of Vera's sad looks. She had given her heart, perhaps unwillingly, to a man who wore the livery of her country's hated master; but whether the look of sorrow which filled her eyes came from some struggle of duty with love, or from a stern prohibition of her father's from speaking to or looking at the lover who had evidently followed her half across Europe, is a question I cannot clear up. I watched him narrowly for several days to see whether he would attempt to follow the girl to her home. But he did nothing of the kind. He remained in the garden, as a rule, for half an hour after the others were gone, and then took his way to an obscure hotel in the outskirts of the town.

"Still, my suspicions were not quieted. They grew day by day more acute. One night at Mierzwinsky's there was present, together with several others, a German named Holzapfel, a man with sly, restless eyes, low forehead, and a hard, rasping voice. I noticed that all through the evening he invariably recalled the conversation, no matter whither it might have tended, back to the subject of traitors in the camp and Russian gold. At first I thought his oblique hints had reference to myself, and this suspicion was not dispelled by the fact that he treated me all through the evening with an unctuous, servile politeness. Along with this thought there grew up another. I knew something of conspirators and their ways, how the loudest-tongued are often wanting in the hour of peril, and think more of saving their own skins than of the cause they talk so much about. I was not at all sure of Herr Holzapfel; nor, I could plainly see, was another one of the gathering. Vera's eyes were fixed almost unceasingly upon his ugly countenance. No word that he spoke was lost upon her, and I noticed, moreover, that Holzapfel, wherever he might turn his leering eyes, never once let them rest on Vera's face.

"I left the house early that night, and as I walked back to my hotel it occurred to me that, in gratifying a whim, I was thrusting my head a little too near to the noose which hangs ever ready over the head of the political malcontent in luckless Sarmatia. At one time I had almost made up my mind that I would go to Mierzwinsky's house no more, but my curiosity was too strong

for my resolution. I recalled to memory the German's grating voice, and Vera's watchful, almost defiant, eyes, as she listened to him. I paced up and down my room, making no move towards bed, for my eyes were very wakeful. I went to the window, drew aside the blinds, and looked out over the roofs and chimneys of the city now bathed in pale moonlight. The night was so fair and still, and my own spirit was so restless and distraught! At last I grew so nervous that I could remain no longer within doors, so I went out and turned my steps heedlessly, now here and now there, till I found myself at last in the street leading to the East Gate. In a few minutes I was at the corner of the narrow way in which was Mierzwinsky's house, and instinctively I turned down it. It was deserted and silent as the grave, and for a minute or two I stood still, trying to make out whether any light yet shone in the windows of the house I had recently quitted. It stood, slightly projecting into the street, about twenty yards distant, dark as night; but, suddenly, a gleam of light shone through the shutters of the window above the central door, and, at the same moment, I heard a faint sound in the street, and my eye caught the movement of a figure crouching under the wall opposite to the house, and about twenty yards beyond it. Some impulse—I shall never know what prompted it—made me draw quickly back into an archway, and await any further manifestation there, and not in the brilliant moonlight. I had not been in hiding more than ten minutes when the figure of a woman, shrouded in a long cloak, swept past the entry. Rapid as the motion was, I knew at once that the face was Vera's, and when, after a space of time which was probably not more than three minutes, though it seemed like an hour, a man shambled past, going in the same direction, I saw plainly that it was Holzapfel. Now I read plainly the meaning of his covert hints. The traitor, or, rather, the traitress at whom he had been pointing, was no other than the daughter of their chief.

"I waited till I saw Vera pass along towards the East Gate, and then I set out to do my double spying. Holzapfel crept along with noiseless tread in the black shadow of the houses about a hundred yards behind. The Public Gardens here stretched away to the left, and into this Vera went with rapid step, almost as if she knew she was being dogged. I quickened my pace likewise, and by the

time I was under the shadow of the trees I was within thirty yards of Holzapfel, who, I could see, was walking irresolutely. At last he came to a dead stop, and then I stepped aside amongst the trees, which were thick and tangled just at this place. I crept on tiptoe through the bushes till I was within a couple of yards of the place where he was standing. The moonlight streamed down through a rift in the foliage, and showed me his ugly face, made yet uglier with the workings of disappointed malice. 'Cursed witch! she has escaped me!' I heard him mutter, as he stood peering into the darkness before him. 'But I am sure of her, first or last.' He stood a second or two perfectly still, and then, with noiseless rapidity, started back into the shadow of the trees, just opposite to the spot where I myself was concealed.

"He must have heard some sound, too faint to reach my ears in the place where I stood; but, after a minute or two, I became conscious that the silence was broken by the slowly-pacing tread of footsteps coming towards us. My heart grew cold within me as I thought of what would probably be revealed to me in the next few seconds. As the moments dropped away, my dread became a certainty, and it was hardly a surprise to me when I saw Vera, with Natriskine's arm around her, emerge out of the gloom of the shaded walk into the patch of moonlight on the path in front of me. In a second they passed over it, and were lost to sight; and then a rustling in the bushes opposite told me that the spy was again on their track.

"I think my mind must have been a little thrown off its balance by the strange events of the night. I remember seeing the spy sneak out of his hiding-place, and follow the lovers along under the trees; but I remember little else. I have some faint recollection of hammering long and loud at the door of my hotel, and of stumbling up the pitch-dark stairs to my room, but that is all."

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

KENT. PART I.

THE County of Kent still bears as its rightful badge or coat-of-arms the old Saxon standard of the White Horse, together with the proud motto, "Invicta," as may be seen any day stencilled upon those tightly-packed cylinders, called pockets, of Kentish hops. This ancient

badge and motto recall the claims of the county to historic pre-eminence. Here we have an ancient kingdom as well as a modern county, the earliest home of civilisation in the land:

Kent, in the commentaries Cæsar writ,
Is term'd the civil'st place of all this isle.

And we may infer that its people were skilled in agriculture and the arts of peace, at a time when the interior of the island was occupied by nomadic tribes clad with skins, and subsisting on the chase and the products of their flocks and herds. Thus the order and security that were to be found under the Roman Empire, were accepted readily enough by the natives of Kent. Along her shores were the ports and harbours, through which the great streams of traffic between Britain and the rest of the empire ran to and fro. Her headlands shone with lighthouses; noble roads traversed the country, along which passed a continual line of passengers—proud Roman pro-consuls, with their equipages and households; prefects and tribunes in their warlike panoply; soldiers of every nation on the march for the various garrisons; merchants from Gaul, laden with wares from all parts of the known world; theatric stars with their baggage; strolling mimes and dancers with their packs; and all the fringe and rabble of an age of wealth and luxury.

Along the line of route, wherever a pleasant, sunny nook was to be found—and how many such there are on the line of Old Watling Street between London and the coast!—there would be reared the handsome villa of the patrician. And at intervals appeared the fortified stations, where, at the end of each day's journey, the soldiers on the march found rest and refreshment. The great port of Roman times was Rutupie on the coast near Sandwich; where the river Stour at that time formed a convenient estuary, and where now the remains of Roman walls and towers rise in lonely state over wide, sandy flats, and lonely, almost desolate country. Within these walls, now known as Richboro' Castle, was stationed a garrison of the second Augustan legion, and in the days of desolation and terror, when the great Empire of the West was breaking up under barbarian inroads, this was the last post that was held by the Roman legionaries, before they sailed away from Britain.

Not far distant from the last scene of the old order of things in Britain, is the

spot where began the first definite step in the making of England. "There is little to catch the eye in Ebbsfleet itself," writes Mr. Green, in his *History of the English People*, "a mere lift of ground, with a few greycottages scattered over it; cut off nowadays from the sea by a reclaimed meadow and a sea-wall. But taken as a whole, the scene has a wild beauty of its own. To the right the white curve of Ramsgate cliffs looks down on the crescent of Pegwell Bay. Far away to the left, across grey marsh levels, where smoke-wreaths mark the site of Richboro' and Sandwich, the coastline trends dimly towards Deal. . . . At the time of Hengist's landing a broad inlet of sea parted Thanet from the mainland of Britain. . . . Pirate-boats would naturally come sailing to what was then the gravel-spit of Ebbsfleet."

In the Isle of Thanet, it is generally agreed, we have the first Saxon settlement—assigned peaceably to the Saxons by their British hosts, in reward for their services against the Picts and Scots. According to the Welsh bards, however, the Isle of Thanet was given to the Saxons by Gwitheyrn, in exchange for the beautiful daughter of Hengist, whom later chroniclers call Rowena, but who was known to the British as Alice Rhonwen. Anyhow, it is known that Thanet soon proved too small for the swarms of Saxons who got intelligence of the new field that was open to their enterprise, and soon they spread over the northern parts of Kent, and even essayed to cross the Medway and make their way towards London. But at Aylesford—the first practicable ford over the river—they were met by the Kentish men of the period. And it is worth notice that in this, the first set combat of the struggle, the invaders got a thorough beating, and their leader, Horsa, was killed. The curious dolmen that crowns the hill above Aylesford, and is known as Kit's Coty House, is said to mark the burial-place of the Saxon chief. Two years later, Hengist and his son Eric completely routed the Britons at Cregganford, or Crayford; and from that time the white horse of Hengist became the acknowledged standard of the newly-conquered kingdom of Kent.

Whether the Cinque Ports took their rise about this time, or earlier, or later, can only be guessed at. Hythe, from its name, seems to be a later Saxon settlement; but Dover was a Roman port, with a garrison of Tungrian soldiers, and Sandwich only took the place of the Roman Rutupiaë, when

some change in the channel of the river Stour choked up the earlier harbour. The name of Romney, New and Old, seems to suggest a Roman origin, while the famous embankments that protect Romney Marsh are possibly of equal antiquity. At any rate, the laws and customs of Romney Marsh are of very high antiquity, and have formed the type and model of the regulations affecting sea-walls and embankments throughout the country. The customs of Romney Marsh, as early as Thirty-fifth Henry the Third, are called "antient and approved"; and in the same reign, Henry de Bathe, one of the King's Justices, held a sessions at Romanhall, or Romney Court-house, to codify the existing customary laws.

The Cinque Ports probably came into existence as free towns, settled and inhabited by merchants and seafaring men from the neighbouring coasts, and hoisted their own flag and lived under their own laws without much communication with the inland people about them, while nominally under the jurisdiction of the ruling prince. The part, indeed, of Kent in the Saxon heptarchy was not very important. Its settlers, though of a kindred race, were distinguished by certain tribal traits from the rest of the Saxon people. They were Jutes from the sea-girt peninsula of Jutland, and the men of Kent have always retained a certain independence or isolation from the rest of the kingdom, which may be due in some measure to their different origin.

The communication kept up by the Kentish ports with the mainland of Gaul was, indirectly, the means of reclaiming the land to Christianity and civilisation. Ethelbert, King of Kent, instead of seeking a wife among the daughters of the neighbouring Saxon princes, went a-wooing among the Frankish rulers of Gaul, and brought back as his wife Bertha, the daughter of the Christian King of Paris. There existed in the neighbourhood of Canterbury, "on the east side," as Baeda writes, "near the city, a church dedicated to the honour of St. Martin, built while the Romans were still in the island, wherein the Queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian, used to pray." The church still remains in evidence, built for the most part of Roman brick, and probably not greatly altered from its original form, one of the most ancient and interesting monuments of the Christian faith in this island. Through the influence of Queen Bertha, St. Augustine and his missionaries received permission to land and

preach the Christian faith in Kent, and it was in the little church of St. Martin that "they first began to meet to sing, to pray, to say mass and to baptise, till the King, being converted to the faith, they had leave granted them more freely to preach, and build, or repair churches in all places."

The religious foundations of St. Augustine have a great deal to do with the subsequent history of Kent, and it must be borne in mind that the Abbey of St. Augustine, founded by the saint himself outside the walls of the city of Canterbury, in the eastern suburb of Langport, was a distinct and, in after years, often rival establishment to the convent of Christ Church, a later Benedictine priory, on whose chapter nominally devolved the important duty of choosing the Primate of all England. The former abbey, whose remains are now incorporated in a modern clerical college, seems to have acquired at one time or another most of the rights and privileges of the original Princes of Kent. St. Augustine's Abbey became the great land-owner of the county and the holder of its chief lordships and royalties. To this day there is no more common name in Kent than Austin or Austen, and these Austens in origin were, no doubt, tenants of the mighty Abbey of St. Augustine, known more familiarly as St. Austen.

The supremacy of the see of Canterbury over the rest of the bishops was, at first, an affair more of sentiment and of consideration for the fame of its founder than of ecclesiastical right. It was not till the see received a bishop direct from the ordination of the Pope that Canterbury began to assert its metropolitan authority. This was in the time of Egbert, King of Kent, and the circumstances attending the coming of the first Archbishop, as told by Baeda, are curious enough. Great difficulties had been experienced in the consecration of English bishops, and when the King of Northumbria finally espoused the cause of the orthodox Roman rule against that of the Celtic Church, and sent Chad—afterwards the Lichfield bishop and saint—to be ordained at Canterbury, he found the bishopric vacant by the death of its incumbent, while there was no other bishop except Wine, of Winchester, canonically ordained in all Britain. But the difficulty was eluded by sending Chad to Winchester, where he was consecrated with the assistance of two bishops of the British Church, who were supposed to be sound in their views as to when Easter ought to be kept.

To remedy this state of things Egbert, King of Kent, and Oswy, of Northumbria, sent one Wigham to Rome to be ordained by Pope Vitalian, but Wigham was carried off by a pestilence, and the Pope chose Theodore, a Greek, born at Tharsus in Cilicia, to occupy the vacant see, and sent an African named Adrian as a guard upon him that he should introduce no Greek customs into England. There was no jealousy of papal influence at that date in England, or at all events in Kent. Theodore was received with gratitude as a special gift from Rome, and his authority, as coming direct from the holy chair, was generally acknowledged. Theodore soon made his power felt by deposing his chief rival, and making bishops here and there.

The supremacy of Canterbury over the rival primacy of York was not, however, finally established till the time of Lanfranc, the intrusive Norman prelate who came from William's abbey of St. Stephen's at Caen. But this brings us to another epoch of Kentish history, about which the annals of the county have something to tell us.

Something of the spice of independence not to say jealousy, of the surrounding people—men from the shires, as they are still called by the men of Kent—may have kept the bulk of the fighting men of the county aloof from the great muster of Englishmen under Harold. The immediate tenants of the Godwin family were there, no doubt, and fought in the van on the fatal day of Senlac; but if the old chroniclers are to be believed, the men of Kent mustered under their own leaders, and made a compact of their own with the Conqueror. According to the story, a strong force of Kentish men intercepted the Conqueror's march on London. They lay in ambush at Swanscombe, not far from the Roman Watling Street, along which William was marching, a place surrounded by numerous entrenchments, and the site of a supposed Danish camp; their numbers concealed by oak-boughs, which each man carried, giving the force the appearance of a moving wood like that which came to Dunsinane. The Conqueror was alarmed at the sight of an army of the strength or composition of which he was unable to judge, and came to a parley with the leaders of the host, who agreed to give him a free passage and accept him as their King on his undertaking to confirm them in all their ancient immunities and liberties. The compact was accepted and fairly

adhered to by William, and to this day Kent retains her old laws and customs; and for this she bears on her standard the proud motto, "Invicta".

Certainly feudalism has left fewer traces in Kent than elsewhere. Throughout the county, wherever not expressly disgavelled by Act of Parliament, the land is held under the ancient custom of gavelkind, by which all the sons, or, failing sons, the daughters, of the owner, at his decease, share the inheritance equally among them. Nor had feudal forfeitures any existence in Kent. "The father to the bough, the son to the plough," was the old motto; that is, the son took the father's land, whether or not his progenitor incurred the penalties of treason or felony, and, notwithstanding cruel proscriptions at various times, the land remained solidly in the hands of the yeomanry of the county.

Lambarde, who made a perambulation of Kent in the reign of Elizabeth, is enabled to write: "The yeoman, or common people, is nowhere more free and jolly than in this shire. It is agreed by all men that there never were any bondmen (or villaines, as the law calleth them) in Kent." And everybody knows the old rhyme:

A knight of Cales, a gentleman of Wales, a squire of the West Countree,
A yeoman of Kent, with his yearly rent, will buy them all the three.

The date of this distich is pretty evidently the latter days of Elizabeth's reign, and the Knight of Cales is the Knight of Cadiz; for, at the capture of Cadiz by Essex, a heavy batch of Knights were dubbed by the conquering general, and these Knights were generally regarded, like James's Novia Scotia Baronets, as not quite up to the standard of their dignities. And this was the golden age of the Kentish yeoman, of whom but few specimens are now to be found. Many of the class developed into Squires and Knights, and became the founders of distinguished families, a greater number gave way to too much freedom and jollity, and, overwhelmed with bonds and mortgages, saw their lands pass away into the hands of successful traders and money-scriveners. Yet, even in these days, Kent is still notable for the number of its freeholders; any large estates within its borders have been acquired and pieced together within a period not very remote. Of the yeoman of Shakespeare's time, in his early unsophisticated stage, we have a picture in the song of the Yeoman of Kent, as he goes a wooing:

I will put on my best white sloppe,
And I will wear my yellow hose,
And on my head a good grey hat,
And in't I'll stick a lovely rose.

A considerable foreign element has at various times been introduced into the county; the earliest immigration of which we have any account occurring "in the time of Robert, Earl of Flanders—called of Jerusalem, owing to having been at the taking of that city by Godfrey of Bouillon—when Flanders was so afflicted with plague, famine, inundations, and continual rains, from October, 1108, to April, 1109, that many of the inhabitants were forced to retire into England, where they were planted in a colony in the east part of the country by Henry the First." Some of these Flemish emigrants seem to have established themselves in Kent, and to have settled themselves here and there as weavers and wool-combers; and later on, in the reign of Edward the Third, and under the patronage of his Queen, Philippa of Hainault, a further body of skilled cloth-workers settled in the Kentish towns and villages.

The weaver of the old village polity was a simple workman like the smith or the wheelwright, who worked up the wool of the village into cloth, receiving payment mostly in kind from those who employed him. The Fleming introduced new methods, and a different mode of production and distribution. The plenty of fuller's earth to be found in Kent and Sussex, and the easy application of water-power, favoured the rise of the industry. Fulling mills were built by the streams, the rattle of the loom was heard in the neighbouring cottages; and the clothier, collecting the manufactured web from his workpeople, finished and dyed it on his own premises, and stored it in the roomy hall of his dwelling.

But the Flemings were also skilful in finance and in clerky duties generally. They were largely employed in the Royal Treasury, and were often farmers of the public revenue. Taxation had weighed with cruel pressure on the agricultural classes. The great wars of Edward the Third and the Black Prince had been paid for in the wool of English flocks, of which Kent had furnished its full quota. But then, if there had been great burdens there had been also great victories; and it may be said a great deal of plunder in which the bowmen and billmen had a share. With defeat abroad and invasion at home, however, the coast of Kent ravaged, her ports and towns spoiled and laid under contribution—with

all this loss and ignominy added to their burdens, the people of Kent began to lose patience.

It was felt, too, by the commons of Kent, that their necessities were being turned to cruel account by their superiors. What they had preserved by bill and bow was surely decaying and melting away under the régime of scribes and lawyers. Everywhere the dominion of the manor and the lord was encroaching on the free tenure of the yeoman. To add to it all, the Poll-tax—always an unpopular impost even when collected by the parish officials, men who were not hard upon neighbours, and knew how to be judiciously blind on occasions—the Poll-tax was now taken up and farmed by the Flemings, who set to work to sweep it in after a rigid and business-like fashion.

There is little doubt that the popular version of the Kentish rebellion is the true one, and that the rising was kindled first of all by the insult offered to the daughter of Walter the Tiler, of Dartford, by the collector of the Poll-tax. Once kindled, the insurrection spread like fire. The Dartford men began it on the 5th of June, and by the 10th of that month all Kent was up in arms—Kent and Essex, too, and a great part of Lincolnshire, while right away into Yorkshire the insurrection spread and gathered head. But the men of Kent were in the van, vanguard of liberty, ye men of Kent.

The castle of Canterbury was seized, the sheriff of the county taken prisoner. Everywhere the escheat rolls of the King's taxes, the assessments of the subsidy, were destroyed; and the court-rolls and the records of the manors shared the same fate. There were tumults and outrages here and there, but in a general way the rising was conducted with much order and discretion. A general levy was made of the fighting men of the various hundreds, under the authority of the leaders of the revolt. Everywhere in the parish churches the numbers demanded from each parish were read out, and everywhere the men of Kent responded with alacrity to the call.

Next day the men of Kent were in possession of London, and a few days after, Simon of Sudbury, the Archbishop, was killed. The Court and the nobility quailed before the storm. The Tower of London and all the defences of the city were held by the rebels. But these, after all, were only honest men for the most part, with grievances that they would have redressed,

but with no fixed purpose to overthrow the general constitution of the State. They believed, too, in the King, and in his justice. And when they were told, in his name, that their prayers were answered, that their grievances should be redressed, and a full amnesty granted to all concerned, the bulk of the insurgents went back to their homes rejoicing—marching by parishes, each parish furnished with the King's letter of pardon.

Wat Tyler, however, remained behind with a goodly following to exact a due performance of the capitulation, until, as everybody knows, he was slain by Walworth, the Lord Mayor, and his followers were cajoled in the same way as their neighbours.

And then began the cruel reprisals of thoroughly frightened rulers. The King's justiciars visited each town and village; the inhabitants were mustered, and called upon to produce their letters of pardon, which were torn up before their faces.

Some attempt, indeed, was made to call out the men of Kent for resistance. On the 1st of July it is recorded that John Gymbon of Maidstone, who was very probably an ancestor of the historian, appeared before the bailiffs of Canterbury, and required them to make a levy of the whole community to resist the Lords and Justices. But a revulsion of feeling had set in. The general opinion was in favour of trusting to the King's promises. And thus, taken in detail, the men who a few weeks before had held at their mercy both Court and city, were rapidly consigned to the gallows like sheep to the shambles. The chief actors in this reign of terror were John of Gaunt and Judge Tresilian, names long after execrated in Kent. There is a kind of poetic justice to be found in the fact that Tresilian himself was hanged some years after for his corrupt complaisance to the party of the Court. John of Gaunt, indeed, lived to be "time-honoured Lancaster", and died full of years and honours. The retribution that was due to him came upon his children's children.

It was, indeed, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who had followed Wat Tyler, who once more rose in insurrection under Jack Cade. Once more the Kingdom was uneasy and discontented, burdened with the costs of long wars and with the results of mismanagement and disgrace. Maine and Anjou, and all the conquests of the last reign, had been lost, and there was a general feeling of bitterness and irritation. A kind of revolution

in the palace occurred at this moment. Suffolk, Queen Margaret's favourite, was deposed and banished, but in his flight he was intercepted by ships fitted out by the Cinque Ports. According to Shakespeare's text, Suffolk was killed haphazard by his captor, but other accounts state that a boat was seen to put off from the shore containing a block, a rusty axe, and the muffled figure of the executioner.

It is not very clear what the Cinque Ports men had to do in that particular galley, nor what connection this irregular justice had with Cade's rebellion. Shakespeare, however, links the events together in a loose kind of fashion. Richard, Duke of York, at that time operating against a chronic rebellion in Ireland, saw his opportunity in the popular disaffection, and employed one Jack Cade, of Ashford, a man known to him by his daring courage in the Irish wars, to raise the men of Kent. Further on, Cade is described as a clothier, but anyhow he seems to have been a skilful leader, as, with his raw levies, he contrived to put to flight the Royal forces, near Sevenoaks. And then, for a time, London was again at the mercy of the men of Kent. But Cade was eventually deserted by his followers, whose aims were agrarian rather than political, and he fled into Kent, where he was killed by one Iden, a country squire, in his (the squire's) garden. "Tell Kent, from me, she hath lost her best man," were among the last words of Cade—words, more probably, handed down by tradition than due to the imagination of the writer.

Then Shakespeare brings the Duke of York upon the scene, advancing to meet the King's forces, which are encamped in the fields between Dartford and Blackheath. Iden is introduced with the head of Cade, and receives his knighthood and a reward of a thousand marks, and on this last head Shakespeare is exact and well informed. But the historical counterpart of the scene itself must be sought two years after the death of Cade, when Richard of York first appeared in arms against the King, and, failing to win over London, retreated into Kent, where, no doubt, he felt sure of many sympathisers and abundant recruits. And there is considerable historic foreshortening in the scene, when presently—"Drums. Enter Warwick and Salisbury with forces." Now, Warwick and Salisbury did raise forces in Kent, and considerable forces. But that was in 1460, ten years after Cade's rebellion, and then the men of Kent sent for these two lords

to take command of their levies, and four thousand armed men were in waiting at Sandwich, and presently forty thousand men, it is said, followed the two lords to London. No doubt it was these men of Kent who marched with Warwick to Northampton, where they overthrew the King's forces and took the King himself prisoner—a rude and tardy retribution for the cruelties of the King's progenitor.

COUNT PAOLO'S RING.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XIII.

"ANOTHER letter! Really, Angela, what an immense correspondence you have."

Mrs. Monteith, who happened to be in a peevish mood, looked inquisitively at the letter, and the crest on the envelope, as she passed it across the table to Angela.

"One this morning, and now another! Who is it from?"

Angela paled a little at the sight of the letter. She had expected it for some days and had looked for it eagerly, but now that it had come, she shrank from opening it under the gaze of Mrs. Monteith's curious eyes. She longed to take it to her room and read it alone, but she knew that such a proceeding would give great offence to Mrs. Monteith, whose curiosity had been aroused by the elaborate crest on the envelope. She opened it with trembling fingers. As she expected, it was from the Princess di Capri, and contained an invitation to visit her at her house in Paris.

"I hear you are to be married soon, my child," the Princess wrote. "I should like to see you again before the event takes place. Can you spare me a few weeks? If your friends will permit, I will send my maid and courier to meet you in London next week. You must name the day when you write."

The letter went on to speak of all the Parisian gaieties, and concluded with a message to Mrs. Monteith, asking her to spare Angela to her old friend for a few weeks. "We will not limit the time—not less than six or seven," the Princess wrote.

Angela read the letter gravely. She looked up at last and met Mrs. Monteith's enquiring eyes, and forced a smile.

"My letter is from the Princess di Capri," she said; "she has invited me to spend a few weeks with her in Paris before my marriage. It is a very kind letter; you may read it."

Nancie, who was sitting at the opposite side of the table, fancied that Angela spoke very oddly; that her colour paled; and that a troubled look came into her dark eyes as she passed the letter to Mrs. Monteith. It was written in French, and though she would have scorned to acknowledge the fact, and was fond of airing a French phrase now and then, Sanscrit would have been equally intelligible to Mrs. Monteith. She took the letter, put up her eyeglass, then shook her head gravely.

"What a wretched writer the Princess is! I can't make head or tail of it, Angela. There," and she passed the letter back again, "you can read it for me—in English, I mean."

Angela obeyed. Nancie, who was painting a group of yellow daffodils, listened, and wondered a little that Angela did not look more delighted.

"You will go, of course, my dear; you must not disappoint the dear Princess," and Mrs. Monteith drew herself up and smiled blandly at Angela's grave face. "Next week! That is short notice, but I dare say you can manage to get ready by then, and it would be better to go now than later on. You will return, I suppose, about the end of May?"

"I suppose so," Angela said absently.

"Don't you want to go, Angela?" Nancie said in a surprised tone. "Why, I should be half wild with delight."

"Oh yes, I should like it very much," Angela answered hurriedly; "the Princess was very kind to me years ago. I shall be glad to see her again."

"And you will see Noel as you pass through London; that will be pleasant," Nancie said cheerfully, and again she fancied that Angela's face clouded, and that the anxious look crept into her eyes again.

She had been odd and unlike herself ever since the ball, Nancie thought. She had grown so quiet and dreamy, and seemed to take so little interest in anything, that Nancie used to wonder sometimes if she was quite happy in her engagement, and felt quite certain that she did not look forward to her marriage with the perfect happiness and satisfaction with which Nancie herself regarded the approaching event of her own life. But once when she ventured to hint her doubt, Angela had turned upon her a look of such utter surprise and indignation, and had protested with such passionate earnestness that she could imagine no greater happiness than to be Noel's wife—that every day and every hour of her life she loved him

better, and was more grateful than ever for the priceless blessing of his love—that Nancie felt quite snubbed, and meekly apologised for her doubts. But still she was not quite satisfied. If Angela were indeed as happy as she declared herself to be, why did she look so thoughtful and pale, and what was the meaning of that waiting, expectant look which had lately come into her eyes?

After the arrival of the Princess's letter, however, Nancie noticed another change in Angela. She was as grave and quiet as ever, but the anxious look had vanished. Her eyes were brighter, her colour had returned, and a new, resolute expression had replaced the dreamy, expectant look which had puzzled Nancie so much. Always affectionate in her manner to Nancie, she was more than usually so during the few days which elapsed between the arrival of the letter and her departure for Paris. She seemed, indeed, as if she could scarcely bear to be separated from her even for a few days, and Nancie would sometimes look up, and find her lovely eyes watching her with an odd, wistful gaze.

"Why do you look at me so earnestly, child? One would think you had committed some secret but unpardonable offence, for which you were pleading for forgiveness," she said one day, in a half-jesting, half-earnest tone. "Come, confess—what is it?"

"Nothing."

Angela smiled, but, even while the smile lingered on her lips, the tears came into her eyes. She left her seat, and, coming across the room to the window where Nancie sat, knelt down by her side and put her clasped hands on her knee.

"I was thinking how sweet and kind you have always been to me, Nancie," she said very softly. "Ah, did any other girl ever meet with such kind friends, I wonder? First Count Paolo, then you, then"—and her face brightened—"Noel. I was thinking how much love had been given to me, how little I had ever done to merit it. Why is it, Nancie? There are some hearts who go lonely all through life, and others to whom so much is given, and who deserve it so little. I have been one of the fortunate ones so far."

"As you always will be, my sweet," and Nancie smiled tenderly at the pretty creature kneeling at her feet, with the sunshine streaming on her golden head. "Who could help loving you, I wonder. Tell me, Angel, did not Count Paolo—eh?"

And she laughed and nodded significantly.

Angela coloured and looked half indignant, half amused at the question.

"Count Paolo! I could not fancy him in love with any woman," she said. "I don't think he will ever marry; he has other things to think of."

She smiled quietly as she spoke, but her eyes grew thoughtful. She was silent for a moment, then

"Nancie," she said softly, "we part to-morrow, you and I, we cannot tell what may happen before we meet again. Oh, it will be but for a few weeks, I know, but even one week—nay, one day, one hour—may change the whole current of one's life. And there is one thing which I want to say to you now before we part—that I love you with all my heart; that, as long as I live, I shall bless and thank you for all your goodness to me—I pray that in the years to come it may be repaid to you a thousand-fold; that Heaven's brightest sunshine may follow you through all your life, as it will—I know it will," she cried fervently.

The light in her eyes, the look of passionate gratitude and love upon her face, made it so exquisitely beautiful that Nancie gazed at her with wonder and delight, as she bent her head and kissed the beautiful uplifted face.

"Why, you silly child, what nonsense are you talking!" she said affectionately.

"Is it nonsense?"

"Of course it is. Kind to you! Of course I have been kind to you; who could help it? And, indeed, you seem far more my real sister than Carrie does," Nancie went on meditatively, "though you are such a faraway cousin that one's brain absolutely refuses to determine what the exact relationship may be. I suppose Noel will meet you in London, Angel?"

"Yes, at the station; then I am to dine with his cousin in Kensington, and he will take me to Charing Cross, where the Princess's maid will meet me."

"That will be jolly for you."

"Yes, I should like to see him again before I go," Angela said absently.

"Before you go!" Nancie mimicked the absent voice. "What a melancholy tone! Why, one would think you were starting off on some perilous journey, from which there was very little chance of returning alive, instead of to Paris. I only wish I could induce Maurice to take me there for our honeymoon. I did suggest it, but he looked

so unutterably wretched that I dared not pursue the subject farther. It is unfortunate that our tastes are so diametrically opposed," Nancie went on with a comical grimace, "that he should incline to sylvan while I prefer urban amusements. He would like to select some quiet village in Devonshire, or the Lake district, for the scene of our honeymoon, where we could moon all day long by the side of some rippling stream, and read poetry, and do 'the world forgetting—by the world forgot' business. I dare say it will come to that in the end." Nancie sighed. "I shall consent in some moment of mental aberration to the sylvan scheme, and resign myself to unutterable boredom. Oh, how tired we shall get of each other, and how glad we shall be to return to the haunts of men!"

Angela laughed.

"I don't think there is much fear of that. But here comes Mr. Lansdell; you had better ask his opinion," she said lightly, and she laughed softly as Nancie started up and turned to meet her lover with a bright blush and smile. There was little fear of Nancie being bored when with Lansdell, she thought.

It was a little past two o'clock when, on the following afternoon, Angela reached London. Sir Noel was waiting on the platform, and together they drove to Mrs. Lansdell's house in Kensington. There they dined, and after dinner Sir Noel and his cousin accompanied Angela to Charing Cross Station, where she was met in the waiting-room by the Princess's maid and courier.

Sir Noel was considerably touched and pleased by her evident reluctance to say good-bye to him. She was generally so quiet, and reserved, and averse to any open display of feeling; but now as the whistle sounded, and he sprang into the carriage and bent his head and kissed her, with a tender, "Good-bye, darling; take care of yourself!" she clung to him silently, and returned his kiss with a sudden passionate tenderness that surprised him greatly.

"Good-bye—good-bye!" she said, and there were tears in her eyes as she looked out of the window and waved a last farewell.

Angela found, on reaching the Princess's house in Paris, that her papers were already in order, and all the arrangements for her journey made.

She was to leave Paris on the following morning with a German lady and gentleman, friends of the Princess, who were

travelling to Berlin, and willingly consented to take charge of the Princess's young protégée so far.

After that she was to travel alone to St. Petersburg.

"You are to take the name of Belton. It is the name of one of the ladies who answered Madame Ruskoi's advertisement. You are not afraid, are you, my dear child?" the Princess said, with a wistful tenderness in her voice, as, having told Angela of the arrangements for her journey, she looked down at the grave, beautiful face. "Remember! It is not too late to draw back. If your courage fails you, do not hesitate to say so. Rest assured that neither Paolo nor I would blame you."

The two women were sitting side-by-side in the Princess's boudoir. Angela smiled, and kissed the fair white hand which rested caressingly on her arm.

"I am not afraid of that, or anything else, madame," she said with a brave smile.

"Our prayers will be yours; our hearts will be with you. Whether you succeed or fail, our undying love and gratitude will be yours," the Princess cried in her thrilling voice. "Paolo's; mine; and not ours only, but the love and gratitude of hundreds of whom you have never heard."

"I shall not fail, rest assured, madame," Angela answered confidently. "The guerdon you offer is much too good for the task. Where is the Count now?"

"Paolo? I do not know. He was here but last week, but now——" And the Princess raised her eyebrows. "Who knows?"

"Then I shall not see him before I start, madame?" and Angela looked disappointed.

"I fear not, my child; perhaps on your return he may be here," the Princess answered kindly.

"On my return! I wonder when that will be?" Angela said with a strange smile.

And then a deep silence fell upon the two women, and they sat side-by-side with closely-clasped hands, each too busy with her own thoughts to care to speak. Angela was the first to break the silence.

"I must write some letters to-night; they will be anxious to hear if I have arrived safely," she said. "At what hour do we start to-morrow, madame?"

"Soon after eleven. We are to meet

Madame de Koningska at the station. You will find her a pleasant travelling companion, Angela, and her husband is charming."

Angela hoped, in spite of the Princess's words, that Paolo might arrive before she left, but she hoped in vain. The carriage came to the door next morning, and they drove to the station, where Madame de Koningska and her husband awaited them. They were both charmed with Angela, and proved most pleasant and kind companions. They parted at Berlin with mutual expressions of regret, after vainly endeavouring to persuade Angela to break her journey, and remain with them for a day or two. But the girl, though grateful for the kindness which prompted the invitation, resolutely refused.

"Madame Ruskoi expected me this week, and I must not disappoint her," she said as she thanked Madame Koningska for all her kindness, and promised at some future time to visit her in Berlin.

Angela felt very lonely and desolate as the train moved out of the station, and she looked back and waved a last adieu to her friends. For the first time her courage failed her, and her heart sank, as she thought of the danger of the mission she had undertaken. She was alone in the carriage, and she sank back on the cushions and burst into an agony of tears and sobs. But this weakness was but of short duration. Very soon it passed away, and her courage returned, and with it tenfold strength, never again to waver or to fail. And the time went on; Germany was left behind, and the frontier passed, until, at last, Angela saw in the distance the towers and palaces of St. Petersburg gleaming in the light of the sunset.

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

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Age next Birthday.	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday.	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday.	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday.	PAYMENTS.	
	Yearly.	Half-Yearly		Yearly.	Half-Yearly		Yearly.	Half-Yearly		Yearly.	Half-Yearly
20	£ s. d. 1 12 5	£ s. d. 0 16 9	45	£ s. d. 3 6 2	£ s. d. 1 14 1	20	£ s. d. 1 17 8	£ s. d. 0 19 6	45	£ s. d. 3 16 0	£ s. d. 1 19 2
25	1 16 6	0 18 10	50	3 19 6	2 0 11	25	2 2 11	1 2 2	50	4 11 3	2 7 0
30	2 1 8	1 1 6	55	4 18 3	2 10 8	30	2 9 3	1 5 5	55	5 14 8	2 19 0
35	2 8 1	1 4 10	60	6 3 4	3 3 8	35	2 16 3	1 9 0	60	7 5 11	3 15 4
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